

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5595

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4123

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH CHIEF OF STATE

1. I HAD AN HOUR AND FIFTEEN MINUTE MEETING WITH GENERAL LOPEZ ON NOVEMBER 1 ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTING HIM AN AUTOGRAPHED PHOTOGRAPH OF THE THUNDERBIRDS. HE SEEMED IN HIGH SPIRITS AND SPOKE RAPIDLY WITHOUT PAUSE. HE POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH HONDURAS IS EXPERIENCING A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS, THE MOST SERIOUS ARE THOSE AFFECTING THE ECONOMY.

2. HE SAID THAT HE CONTINUES TO BE FRUSTRATED BY THE WEALTHY PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS, MOSTLY OF ARAB ORIGIN, WHO SEEMS INSENSITIVE TO THE NEED TO GIVE FIRST PRIORITY IN GOVERNMENT PLANNING TO THE PROBLEMS OF CAMPESINOS AND WORKERS. LOPEZ CLEARLY SEES RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS THE MAJOR FOCUS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANNING. HE COMMENTED THAT HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE WEALTHY MERCHANTS AND INDUSTRIALISTS COULD NOT REALIZE THAT THE WORKERS AND CAMPESINOS REPRESENT SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE POPULATION AND CONSTITUTE A
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REAL DANGER TO THE PRESENT STRUCTURE OF THINGS WHEN

THEY SUFFER FROM UNEMPLOYMENT AND MISERY. LOPEZ SAID THAT IT IS TIME TO TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES AND THAT HIS MINISTERS ARE COMPLETING A DECREE TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS WHICH WILL DEAL HARSHLY WITH SPECULATORS, HOARDERS AND OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO INFLATION AND ECONOMIC CHAOS. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE DECREE WILL CREATE PROBLEMS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR BUT THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES WILL BE SMALL COMPARED TO THE PROBLEM OF AN ANGRY MOB OF HUNGRY CAMPESINOS STORMING THE CAPITAL.

3. ON THE EL SALVADOR/HONDURAS NEGOTIATIONS, HE SAID THAT SUFFICIENT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE BUT FELT CERTAIN THAT THE TALKS WOULD NOT BE CONCLUDED IN DECEMBER. HE REMARKED THAT THE BEST HE COULD HOPE FOR IS AN AGREEMENT ON THE DATE AND SUBJECT MATTER OF FUTURE MEETINGS. LOPEZ POINTED OUT THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY'S PROPOSAL FOR A HIGH LEVEL COMMISSION TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON THE EL SALVADOR NEGOTIATIONS IS UNWORKABLE BECAUSE ITS FORMATION WOULD INDICATE A LACK OF FAITH AND TRUST IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE REMARKED, HOWEVER, THAT AT LEAST THE LIBERAL PARTY HAD TAKEN SOME INITIATIVE ON THE MATTER EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD POLITICAL ADVANTAGE IN MIND. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE NATIONALIST PARTY LEADERS SEEM TO BE DOING NOTHING BUT SIT ON THEIR HANDS.

4. AT THE END OF OUR MEETING THE GENERAL THANKED ME FOR MY VISIT AND FOR THE THUNDERBIRD PHOTOGRAPH. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE IS GRATEFUL OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FRIENDLY BUT REMINDED ME THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO REMAIN FRIENDLY AND COMMUNICATIVE THROUGH GOOD TIMES AND BAD. IN GENERAL, LOPEZ APPEARED CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE COUNTRY.

COMMENT: I WAS INTRIGUED BY THE GENERAL'S EXPRESSED HOPES THAT OUR GOVERNMENTS "REMAIN FRIENDLY AND COMMUNICATIVE THROUGH GOOD TIMES AND BAD". I AM HOPEFUL THAT I WILL BE ABLE TO FERRET OUT SOME SPECIFICS. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS MEETING SINCE I HAD ASKED FOR A SHORT APPOINTMENT AND THIS ONE HAD ALREADY TAKEN ONE HOUR AND 15 MINUTES. THROUGHOUT THE MEETING THE GENERAL SPOKE ALMOST WITHOUT PAUSE, MAKING

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IT DIFFICULT TO WEAVE IN A FEW PRE-DETERMINED QUESTIONS. I WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN DETECTING ANY INDICATORS THAT PERHAPS THE GENERAL MIGHT BE FACING AN IMMINENT CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. I SAW NO SUCH INDICATORS. HE SPOKE ENERGETICALLY AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY ABOUT LONG RANGE PLANS, RESERVING HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERN FOR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. CLEARLY THE PROBLEMS WHICH SEEM TO BESIT HIM AT THE MOMENT ARE THOSE OF THE BELEAGURED HONDURAN ECONOMY.

SANCHEZ

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